

The Common Core State Standards

What Every Grade 3-5 Parent Needs to Know about the Common Core

The Common Core State Standards were developed by states and written by educators and education experts, including teachers from our state, to provide a consistent, clear and challenging set of learning expectations for all students. Why? These standards raise the bar for student expectations at each grade level and ensure classroom learning builds on the prior year's learning and prepares students for the next year.

Our state adopted the standards in 2010, and our educators have been transitioning to the Common Core standards ever since. While our state Board of Education adopts standards for our schools, it's up to our districts and teachers to develop their lesson plans and decide on curricular materials. That's why it's important to ask your child's teachers, principals and school officials about their preparation and planning for this school year.

These standards are in place to make sure your child advances through school and beyond with the essential knowledge and skills needed to succeed. Years from now, our young students will go on to graduate ready for college or their chosen career path because these stronger standards lay the foundation for their success.

In the Classroom

You may see a shift in what your child is learning in their grade level this year. Changes in classroom instruction focus on developing students' critical thinking and communication skills, as well as helping students understand how classroom learning relates to the real world. Student-led and small group work is emphasized to foster strong communication and collaboration skills, which are critical to their success in subsequent grades and everyday life. And just as important, these standards will encourage deeper understanding of concepts, leading your child to be more engaged with his or her own learning—asking more questions, making connections to other disciplines, and understanding the “why” and the “how” in addition to the “what.”

The chart below identifies the main instructional changes in English language arts and mathematics, and provides guidance for how each shift looks in the classroom.

Instructional Shift	In the Classroom
ELA – Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction	Reading and writing on real-life events, such as historical events, science, biographies and news articles
ELA – Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and fictional	Students should be able to point out facts and information in a text to support their opinions or answers. Prompts such as, “how do you know that?” or “where did you find that information?” will be used in class discussions.
ELA – Regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary	Students should read texts that focus on building a strong vocabulary and understanding words that appear across content-areas or with multiple meanings. For instance, when reviewing a class reading assignment, students may be asked to explain the meaning of a new word and to use the word in classroom discussion.
Math – Focus	Students should understand the logic and processes of addition and subtraction, including problem solving and place value.
Math – Coherence	Collaboration among all grade level teachers should be encouraged to build on the foundations set in previous grades and expectations of later grade levels. In addition, students should understand how different math topics relate to others.
Math – Rigor	Students should show all of their work and explain their process for arriving at an answer. Instruction will place an emphasis on multiplication and division of whole numbers and fractions, including concepts, skills, and problem solving.

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Be sure to ask your child's teacher what his or her plans are for lessons and how you can help reinforce classroom learning when helping your child at home. While every classroom will learn skills and knowledge through different lessons, here's a look at what¹ you can expect your grade 3-5 student to know and do by the end of the school year:

Third Grade

- Reading closely to find main ideas and supporting details in a story
- Describing the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in stories
- Comparing the most important points and key details presented in two books on the same topic
- Writing opinions or explanations that group related information and develop topics with facts and details
- Solving word problems using addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division
- Beginning to multiply numbers with more than one digit
- Understanding fractions and relating them to the familiar system of whole numbers
- Reasoning about shapes (e.g. all squares are rectangles but not all rectangles are squares)

Fourth Grade

- Describing the basic elements of stories—such as characters, events, and settings—by drawing on specific details in the text
- Comparing ideas, characters, events, and settings in stories and myths from different cultures
- Writing summaries or opinions about topics supported with a set of well-organized facts, details, and examples
- Reporting orally on a topic or telling a story with enough facts and details
- Using whole-number arithmetic to solve word problems, including problems with remainders and problems with measurements
- Adding and subtracting whole numbers quickly and accurately (numbers up to one million)
- Understanding simple decimals in terms of fractions
- Measuring angles and finding unknown angles in a diagram

Fifth Grade

- Summarizing the key details of stories, dramas, poems, and nonfiction materials, including their themes or main ideas
- Identifying and judging evidence that supports particular ideas in an author's argument to change a reader's point of view
- Expanding, combining, and reducing sentences to improve meaning, interest, and style of writing
- Producing writing on the computer
- Adding and subtracting fractions with unlike denominators and solving word problems of this kind
- Understanding the concept of volume, and solving word problems that involve volume
- Graphing points in the coordinate plane (two dimensions) to solve problems
- Analyzing mathematical patterns and relationships